

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

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R 271325Z AUG 76

FM AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8008
INFO AMEMBASSY COLOMBO
AMEMBESSY DACCA
AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD
AMCONSUL CALCUTTA

C O N F I D E N T I A L NEW DELHI 12675

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, IN, BG

SUBJ: GOI SEES BANGLADESH COLOMBO INITIATIVES COUNTERPRODUCTIVE:
INDIA PRESS ATTACKS BDG

REF: A. NEW DELHI 12226 B. DACCA, 4399, C. COLOMBO 3200,

D. NEW DELHI 12549

SUMMARY: MEA DIRECTOR OF THE UN DIVISION TOLD EMBOFFS THAT THE BDG HURT ITS CASE AGAINST THE GOI BY ITS PRESENTATION AT THE MNAC. THE FIRST SALVO IN WHAT APPEARED TO BE THE BEGINNING OF A GOI PROPAGANDA COUNTER-ATTACK AGAINST THE BDG FOR BRINGING THE FARAKKA ISSUE TO THE UN WAS FIRED IN THE AUGUST 27 PRESS. AS EDITORIAL IN THE UNOFFICIAL (AND SOMETIMES UNAUTHORITATIVE)V DAILY OF THE CONGRESS PARTY ATTEMPTED TO IMPLICATE PAKISTAN AND THE US IN INDIA'S TROUBLES WITH BANGLADESH. WE EXPECT THAT THE WAR OF WORDS BETWEEN INDIA AND BANGLADESH WILL INTENSIFY WHEN THE UN BEGINS TO DEBATE FARAKKA AND WILL WATCH CLOSELY TO SEE WHETHER THE PRESS IS ALLOWED TO INVOLVE THE US AND PAKISTAN IN THIS MATER. END SUMMARY.

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1. DURING A REVIEW OF THE COLOMBO CONFERENCE WITH MEA DIRECTOR (UN DIVISION) VINAY VERMA ON AUGUST 25, EMBOFFS ASKED HIS VIEW OF THE BANGLADESH INITIATIVES AT COLOMBO. (VERMA WAS EARLIES QUOTED IN THE NEW DELHI PRESS REFUTING THE BANGLADESH COMPLAINTS IN THE POLITICAL COMMITTEE.) VERMA SAID HE THOUGHT THE BANGLADESH MOVE WAS HARMFUL TO DACCA'S CAUSE. IT HAD NOT WON BANGLADESH ANY SYMPATHY AT COLOMBO AS FAR AS VERMA COULD ASCERTAIN. FURTHER MORE, HE EXPLAINED, RESOLUTIONS ORIGINATING FROM A REGION ARE BY CUSTOM EITHER JOINTLY SPONSORED OR TACITLY AGREED UPON BEFORE THEY ARE INTRODUCED. BANGLADESH'S VIOLATION OF THIS CUSTOM WAS FROWNED UPON BY MANY REPRESENTATIVES, VERMA ADDED. MOREOVER, HE RECALLED THAT NO DELEGATION SPOKE IN FAVOR OF THE BANGLADESHI POSITION.

2. UNOFFICIAL CONGRESS PARTY DAILY, "NATIONAL HERALD," AND CPI'S DAILY, "PATRIOT," CARRIED STRONG EDITORIALS AUG. 27 ATTACKING BDG DECISION TO RAISE FARAKKA ISSUE AT UNGA. STRIKING A MORE IN SORROW THAN IN AGER POSTURE, THE "HERALD" REFERRED TO ANGLASHESH AS A "FRACTURED NATION" WHICH FINDS ITSELF "SINKING IN THE MIRE OF POLITICAL, ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL CHAOS" AND WHICH TURNS ON ITS FRIENDS. THE PAPER CONTINUED: "INSTIGATION BY PAKISTAN AND THE U.S.-- BOTH OF WHOM WERE ON THE OTHERWISE (SIC) OF THE FENCE DURING THE FREEDOM STRUGGLE--CANNOT BE RULED OUT." THE EDITORIAL CONCLUDES THAT IN THE CASE OF FARAKKA INDIA SHOULD NOT MAKE THE SAME MISTAKE IT MADE IN KASHMIR, I.E. NOT MARCHING ITS TROOPS RIGHT UP TO THE PAKISTAN BORDER. INDIA SHOULD INSIST ON 40,000 CUSECS OF GANGES WATER FOR THE LEAN SEASON. AND SECONDLY, INDIA SHOULD "VIGOROUSLY QUESTION" THE UN'S AUTHORITY IN THIS MATTER WHICH IS AN "INTERNAL" ISSUE: 90 PERCENT OF THE AREA IRRIGATED BY THE GANGES IN WITHIN INDIA, AND IT IS THEREFORE AN "INDIAN WATERWAY."

3. THE "PATRIOT" ACCUSES THE BDG OF HAVING ADOPTED A POLICY OF NOT MISSING A CHANCE TO "WIDEN DIFFERENCES WITH INDIA." AND STATES THAT THERE ARE "CERTAIN AGENCIES AND GOVERNMENTS ABROAD" WHO ARE SEEKING TO DISTURB THE STABILITY OF THE SUB-CONTINENT.

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4. IN REPLY TO A WRITTEN INTERROGATORY IN THE LOK SABHA AUGUST 26, THE MEA ANSWERED THAT THE GOI DELEGATION TO DACCA IN JUNE "REJECTED AS REGRETTABLE ATTEMPTS TO MAKE INDIA A SCAPEGOAT FOR THE INTERNAL PROBLEMS OF BANGLADESH. THE INDIAN DELEGATION RE-AFFIRMED THAT INDIA WAS VITALLY INTERESTED IN THE SOVEREIGNTY, INDEPENDENCE AND TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY OF BANGLADESH. INDIA DESIRED A STRONG AND

PROSPEROUS BANGLADESH. THIS WAS IN INDIA'S OWN INTEREST AND CONSISTENT WITH INDIA'S POLICY OF WORKING FOR PEACE AND COOPERATION IN THE SUB-CONTINENT." THE MEA REPLY SAID THAT THE BDG'S RESPONSE TO GOI INITIATIVES TO IMPROVE RELATIONS DURING THE LAST THREE MONTHS HAD "NOT BEEN SATISFACTORY." THE MEA STATEMENT WAS CARRIED BY DELHI PRESS AUGUST 27.

5. COMMENT: THE WRAPS ARE CLEARLY BEING REMOVED NOW ON PRESS COMMENTARY AND ARTICLES ON BANGLADESH. MEA HAS KEPT TO TIGHT REIN ON THESE FOR MOST OF THIS YEAR. THE "NATIONAL HERALD" AND "PATRIOT" EDITORIALS ATTACKING THE BDG FOR BRINGING THE FARAKKA ISSUE TO THE UN WERE PRECEDED BY RECENT EDITORIALS CRITICAL OF THE BDG'S PERFORMANCE AT THE NAC. THE "HERALD'S" INDICATMENT OF PAKISTAN AND THE US AS BEING POSSIBLE RESPONSIBLE FOR THE POOR STATE OF INDO-BANGLADESH RELATIONS IS A THEME WE HAVEN'T HEARD IN RECENT MONTHS. WE WILL BE WATCHING THE PRESS CLOSELY TO DETERMINE IF THIS IS AN ABERRATION OF WHETHER THE PRESS NOW HAS A LICENSE TO CRITICIZE PAKISTAN AND THE US WITH BOTH OF WHICH THE GOI HAS APPARENTLY BEEN SEEKING TO IMPROVE RELATIONS. END COMMENT.
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